

May 27, 2010

WASHINGTON, DC — Today, U.S. Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) gave the following opening statement during a hearing held by the Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Environment. The hearing was entitled, "Combating the BP Oil Spill." Congressman Melancon is a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

Congressman Melancon's statement, as prepared for delivery.

"Thank you Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the Chairman and my colleagues on the committee for their attention and focus on this terrible tragedy in Gulf Waters.

The press reported today that even using the most conservative estimate, the new numbers mean the leak has grown to nearly 19 million gallons over the past five weeks, surpassing the size of the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster in Alaska, which at about 11 million gallons had been the nation's worst spill.

Having flown over this disaster I can tell you personally that the scale and scope of this disaster is greater than you can imagine.

My constituents in St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, Terrebonne and Lafourche are watching this slow-motion tragedy unfold in front of them, and as of today there is still no absolute assurance that this leak will be brought under control in the near future.

I am heartened to hear initial reports that the "top kill" effort appears to have temporarily stopped the flow of oil and gas into the Gulf of Mexico. I hope and pray that these efforts lead to a permanent solution.

The response to this leak has consumed a tremendous number of resources and manpower since the rig first sank weeks ago.

I have been in constant contact with the administration and first responders on the ground. I have also reached out to the local officials in my district to take inventory of their response needs – boom, vessels, etc – and work towards providing these resources as best I can.

And while I know this hearing today is to discuss the current response to the leak I would like to remind my colleagues and the distinguished panel of witnesses today that the recovery phase is just as critical as the response phase. Our culture is threatened and our coastal economies are stake of being lost for decades if we can't deflect this poison from washing into our delicate wetlands.

Even though this marsh surrounds Louisiana these are America's wetlands. Including Outer Continental Shelf production, Louisiana ranks 1st in crude oil and 2nd in natural gas production. In 2006, Louisiana commercial landings exceeded 844 million pounds with a dockside value of \$202 million; accounting for approximately 21% of the total catch by weight in the lower 48

States. Louisiana's coastal wetlands provide habitat for approximately 1.8 million migratory waterfowl.

I will not be able to stay for questions with the panel because I have to leave for Louisiana in just a few minutes. But I would like to leave my colleagues with this message:

Once the leak is stopped, we will still have the largest spill in American history looming off our coast. This spill threatens our communities' health, our robust fisheries, our diverse wildlife and so much more. My prayers are with those men and women working around the clock to address this disaster, and I ask that my friends stand with us in Louisiana to make sure we can recover these valuable resources that we share Americans across our county.

Thank you. I yield back."

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